

**6 Questions on Eriksen, “Nationalism” (117-146),  
and Harrison “Identity as Scarce Resource”**

1. Eriksen says that I. M Lewis sees no reason for distinguishing between “tribes” “ethnic groups” and “nations,” since the difference appears to be one of size, not of structural composition or functioning. Do you agree? Discuss.
2. What does *ideology* mean?
3. Eriksen refers to Benedict Anderson’s notion of the nation as “imagined community.” Discuss.
4. Many people are willing to die for their nation. Where does such strong loyalty to the nation come from, do you suppose?
5. Eriksen discusses rituals and symbols relating to nationalism. List five symbols designed to elicit loyalty and a feeling of belongingness to a nation (yours or another). Discuss three rituals.
6. Describe the creation of the Norwegian nation (Eriksen pp. 122-125).
7. Eriksen writes that when certain practices in a region of a country become reified as national symbols, their meaning changes (p. 124). Discuss, providing two examples.
8. Kinship ideology, feudalism and religion were ways of organizing people efficiently in pre-modern Europe and elsewhere. Why was this no longer so in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries?
9. Describe the differences between pre-modern states and modern nation-states.
10. In what ways does nationalism benefit the state? What are nationalism’s benefits for the citizens of a state?
11. Describe the technological prerequisites for modern nation-states, as discussed by Eriksen.
12. Give three recent examples of the U.S. media playing an important role in the reproduction and strengthening of nationalist sentiments. If you are from another country, see if you can provide examples from there.
13. Give three examples of religion and metaphoric kinship being used to symbolize nationalism, in the US or elsewhere.
14. What is liberalism? Fascism? Feudalism? Capitalism?

15. If urbanization and individualism create a social and cultural vacuum in human lives because family and kinship decline in importance, how does nationalism promise to fill it?
16. Provide three examples of nationalism that targets the state (Eriksen pp. 132-133).
17. Give an example of a non-violent manifestation of nationalist sentiment that targets another nation.
18. Eriksen describes the violent symbols in the conflict between Sinhalese and Tamils in Sri Lanka—images of evil, death, etc. Provide one example of a similar symbol of US nationalism.
19. Because nationalism is tied to states, boundaries are ideally unambiguous and binary—for example, one is or is not a citizen of a given nation-state. Discuss how German nationalism turns out to be far more complicated (Eriksen pp. 136-139).
20. Discuss plural societies/states, whose nationalism is not ethnic in nature. Is the US a plural society? Argue for this notion. Against it.
21. Harrison argues that conflict may emerge because two groups see themselves as having “irreconcilable claims or aspirations to the same identities” (p. 239). Does his argument make sense to you? Discuss.
22. Assume your identity is represented by “inalienable possessions.” What would some of them look like? (Harrison: “Everywhere, people own objects so deeply imbued with their identities that they make every effort to keep these symbolically vital assets to themselves” pp. 239-240.)
23. “Identities that continue over time are therefore never more than provisional constructions which social actors preserve with effort...” (Harrison p. 240). Can you think of an MIT example?
24. “Unauthorized copying” of identity. Discuss one of Harrison’s examples.
25. To what degree, do you think, the controversy over Ayers Rock in Australia discussed in Harrison mirrors controversies in this country over lands claimed as sacred by Native Americans?

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